

MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY OF MARIN
CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

April 20, 2009

TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY OF MARIN
750 LINDARO STREET, SUITE 200
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901



MEETING MINUTES

COC Members Present: Allan Bortel
Ray Hirsch
Amanda Eichstaedt
Ann Batman
Teri Meadows
Joy Dahlgren
Sue Beittel
Barbara George
Scott Tye
Bernard Meyers

Staff Members Present: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director
Li Zhang, Manager of Finance and Administration
Grace Zhuang, Accounting & Administration Specialist

Guests Present: David Rzepinski, General Manager of Marin Transit
Amy Van Doren, Director of Operations of Marin Transit

Chairperson Don Wilhelm was absent. Vice-Chairperson Allan Bortel called the Citizens' Oversight Committee meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

1. Introductions

Committee members, TAM staff and guests did self-introductions. The group welcomed the guests.

2. Approval of April 20, 2009 Meeting Minutes (Action) – Attachments

Ms. Li Zhang pointed out that one correction is needed for the title of Agenda Item 2. The committee is approving the minutes if the February 23, 2009 meeting, instead of minutes of September 29, 2008 as showed on the agenda. Mr. Scott Tye made the motion to approve the minutes with the change and Ms. Barbara George seconded. Mr. Bernard Meyers abstained from the motion since he was not at the February meeting. All other members of the COC committee approved the minutes unanimously.

3. Committee Member Reports (Discussion)

Item 3 was reported following Item 5.

A. TAM Commission Activities – No information was reported for this item.

B. TAM Executive Committee/TAM Board Activities – No information was reported for this item.

C. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Activities – No information was reported from the meeting, but other topics were discussed.

- TAM Executive Director (ED), Dianne Steinhauser, clarified that TAM's TAC has two primary roles. The first role is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Crossing Guard Program and any issues associated with it. All sites will be evaluated next year. The second role of the TAC is overseeing the Major Road projects. The TAC makes sure that the projects are on schedule and funding is available to keep up with the progress and schedule.
- Ms. Annan Paterson, COC's representative that monitors the activities of the TAC, resigned last year and a new representative from the group is needed. ED Steinhauser reminded the group that the TAC doesn't meet often, perhaps once a quarter, and it's very beneficial for the COC to have a representative at these meetings to know what's going on with the programs that the TAC oversees.
- Ms. Zhang reminded members of the COC that there are six members whose terms are expiring on May 31, 2009. Terms of service are four years in length. Applications were mailed to all six members and are due May 8. Ms. Zhang thanked the COC members for their dedication and support of the Measure A program and hopes all members whose terms are due to expire will reapply for appointment by the TAM Board. TAM staff is also doing extensive outreach for the current vacancies on the committee.

D. Marin Transit Activities – Vice-Chairperson Bortel reported on the following items:

- Vice-Chairperson Bortel reported that he took two test rides on the Marin Transit. He said that the service was great and that he enjoyed the ride. Mr. Tye asked why Marin Transit does not allow advertisement on its buses to raise additional revenues, as other agencies do. Ms. Amanda Eichstaedt commented that the shortage of staff may prevent Marin Transit from doing this but since new staff has come on board, it might be something the agency could investigate. Other members agreed that this is a great way to raise revenue and the COC should consider making a recommendation to the Marin Transit Board regarding this option. However, Ms. Joy Dahlgren had a different view. She reported that there was research from different focus groups on transit riders and what they need. One of the things some transit riders expressed is the desire to be treated with dignity and that riding around with the billboards is not very dignified to some people. Also, advertising is not aesthetically pleasing and the revenue raised from it does not offset what it does to the feelings of the passengers. The COC decided that the advertisement issue should be discussed further and a study should be conducted to better understand the opinion of riders/potential riders. Mr. Tye said there are different ways to make this work and he definitely hopes Marin Transit will look into this option. ED Steinhauser mentioned that the COC could communicate this idea with the Marin Transit Board and request this option to be considered/evaluated. The group also discussed the signage/time table improvement plans at the bus stops.

4. **TAM Staff Report**

Vice-Chairperson Bortel asked for an update on the \$20 million Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP) funds that Marin County received for bicycle and pedestrian projects. ED Steinhauser shared her knowledge with the group. The County adopted the initial programs and projects in March/April of 2007 and an updated report was given to the BOS last spring. According to federal guidelines, all funds need to be obligated

by December, 2009. The group is assessing and deciding whether those projects/programs can make the deadlines, if not, funding will need to be moved to other projects in need. There were \$200 million in project needs for this program but only \$20 million is available. The County wants to make sure that there will be no funding loss if a project sponsor can not meet the timeline. It is suggested that Chairperson Wilhelm attend the meeting when DPW gives a progress report before TAM in May or June of 2009.

ED Steinhauser then provided updates for the 101 Gap Closure project. As the group knows, the Highway 101 Gap Closure project has four segments. While the other three segments were finished within budget, TAM is experiencing continuing funding/technical problems with Segment 4, the portion over Puerto Suello Hill. TAM has already contributed \$25 million of Measure A funds but will need to find additional money to help close the funding gap for this project. The project had a low bidder of \$48 million, but it had over 25% of change orders totaling \$13 million. With \$3 million from the original contingencies, an additional \$10 million was needed. Caltrans provided \$3 million during the process and TAM had to struggle to find the other \$7 million. It has been a very challenging process to find the additional funding needed. However, the good news is that the project is more than 70% finished and the southbound carpool lane has opened. It's estimated that there is a 30 minute time saving for people who travel from Highway 37 to Central San Rafael during rush hour. The northbound HOV lane is due to open in the morning of Saturday, April 25, 2009. The rest of the project is scheduled to be completed by fall of 2009.

Mr. Ray Hirsch asked about the material used for the 101 Gap Closure soundwalls. ED Steinhauser informed the group that the material, called Soundsorb, was evaluated three years ago and is an experimental but approved material that absorbs noise. It is a strong porous material that is supposed to capture the noise energy rather than reflect it.

ED Steinhauser also provided a quick update regarding the Marin Sonoma Narrows (MSN) project. Caltrans is receiving approval from FHWA and EPA on the final environmental document for the MSN this week. The only outstanding issue, as ED Steinhauser understands it, is the sound wall in Novato approaching Atherton Avenue on the East side. The community organization on Orange and Olive Streets wants a sound wall on the freeway to protect them from noise. Now, the west side is also interested in the sound wall as well. However, Caltrans could not justify it using federal standards. It is unclear how Caltrans is going to address the issue in the final document, as well as the topic of greenhouse gas initiative evaluation for the project. Mr. Tye raised the issue of relocating the pipelines and expanding the waterlines up to Petaluma as well as water hookups, which is discussed extensively at the North Marin Water District's (NMWD's) public meetings. ED Steinhauser explained that there are portions of the highway widening that will affect the pipelines. Under federal guidelines, these affected portions will be replaced as part of the project. However, if the parent agency wants to upgrade it, it will have to pay the difference in cost. There have been conversations on this topic among all agencies: Sonoma County Transportation Authority, TAM, Caltrans, Marin Municipal Water District and NMWD, etc. All agencies are aware of the community's desires, and the upgrade of the water pipelines may end up as a separate project.

TAM is in the final phase of the Central Southern Marin Transit Study, conducted in cooperation with Marin Transit (MT) and the Golden Gate District (GGD). The study is looking at the best way to deal with transit needs in Marin. ED Steinhauser offered to come back in the future and present the group with a more detail introduction of the study. TAM hired an excellent consultant team to study improvements of the transit hub, freeway transit

stops, local transit stops, and transit priority corridor measures. Cost effectiveness and ridership potential for doing these types of improvements are also part of the study. The plan was originally included in the 2003 Vision Plan by the BOS, the CMA and Marin County Transit District, now Marin Transit. ED Steinhauser also talked about the Trolley Study between Sausalito and Mill Valley, which is part of the main study but funded separately by Supervisor McGlashan's office and the Cities of Sausalito and Mill Valley. The consultants were very generous with their time and effort in producing this study. However, the trolley has proven to be a very expensive and, most likely, not a cost-efficient option. When more funding is available, TAM would be interested in conducting the same study in the other areas of the County.

ED Steinhauser then switched the discussion to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. She reported to the group that the TAM Board has not taken a position on HOT Lanes, but agreed to study the topic further using money dedicated from a federal earmark. The TAM Board also expressed concern regarding the roles of the CMAs during this process and is seeking legislation to provide CMAs the power to accept or reject HOT lanes within their jurisdictions. MTC is moving forward with AB744 which will authorize HOT Lanes for the Bay Area. Since Marin residents recently spent \$25 million to complete the carpool lane in the county, it is important to respect the public's expectations and the financial commitment already made. There are also many operational issues that need to be addressed. The study is going to identify the opportunities and risks, necessary mitigation and most importantly, provide a public process in which to engage the public about this issue. MTC is moving quickly with the process. Additionally, some counties such as Alameda and Santa Clara have passed their own legislations regarding HOT lanes. ED Steinhauser commented that it is important to understand how this works and what kind of impact it may have in Marin. On the other hand, she also pointed out there are funding opportunities in this for the MSN project and we should not turn it away. TAM is hosting a HOT Lane workshop on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 from 6-9 pm in the cafeteria of Redwood High School, and members of the COC are welcome to attend. Staffers from the Alameda and Santa Clara CMAs are invited to the workshop to talk about what they are doing in their counties. MTC will also attend to describe the regional network approach. TAM is hoping that the public in Marin will take this opportunity to better understand the issues and help TAM shape the HOT lane study.

5. Marin Transit Short Range Transit Plan Presentation (Discussion) - Attachment

Item 5 was reported following Item 2.

ED Steinhauser introduced Mr. David Rzepinski and Ms. Amy Van Doren from Marin Transit who provided a brief summary of the Marin Transit Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). Marin Transit's SRTP is an important planning document that provides a ten-year snapshot of Marin Transit's operating and capital activities. Since 55% of the Measure A sales tax goes to transit operations, it's required in the Measure A Expenditure Plan that Marin Transit provide an updated SRTP to TAM every two years. The Marin Transit Board adopted the SRTP this morning and the TAM Board is expected to adopt the Plan at its April 23, 2009 meeting.

Ms. Van Doren gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the following items covered in Marin Transit's updated SRTP:

- Ridership demographics
- Matching service type and standards to demand:
 - Big bus fixed route service
 - Rural transit service

- Small bus fixed route service
 - Paratransit
 - Supplemental school service
 - Seasonal Muir Woods Shuttle
 - Easy Rider/Dial-A-Ride Services
- Transit Service in Novato
- Transit Service in Central Marin
- Transit Service in Southern Marin
- Reflects local responsibility for local service
- Paratransit service principles
- Going beyond the ADA mandate
- Capital priorities
- Near Term Transit District Activities

Ms. Van Doren started that the SRTP is a requirement of the Measure A Expenditure Plan as well as a requirement of the metropolitan planning organization, which in the Bay Area is the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). The Measure A Expenditure Plan mandates a two-year cycle while MTC's requirement is every four years. Marin Transit does update the financial portion of the SRTP every year. The SRTP has to be fiscally constrained and balanced within the first five years of the plan. However, Marin Transit's goal is to have a plan that is balanced in ten years. The 2009 SRTP included significant updates to the 2006 SRTP. It responds to what the conditions are on the ground, who's riding the transit, change in demographics, the priority for Measure A service, changes in travel behavior, and provides a realistic estimate of revenues and expenditures which are updated annually.

Ms. Eichstaedt commended Marin Transit for the great work and stated that the SRTP is a great report to encourage people to ride transit. Members of the COC raised several questions after the presentation:

- One of the committee members asked for a description of the double weekend service of the Stage Coach. Ms. Van Doren informed the group that the original Stage Coach service offered four trips originating from West Marin on weekends. Since last year, three more trips, originating from East Marin, were added. Now there are a total of 7 round trips on the weekends from March to October. The group suggested that Marin Transit should extend its outreach for those weekend services through the Marin IJ and the radio media available in West Marin.
- Mr. Tye asked if Marin Transit will still be able to balance its SRTP if state funding can not come as anticipated due to the financial trouble the state is experiencing. Mr. Rzepinski responded that Marin Transit staff is very aware of the financial trouble the state is in and the impact it may have on Marin Transit's financial picture. He and his staff are trying to make conservative and realistic assumptions about the revenues. For example, even though the Governor's proposal is only to suspend the State Transit Assistance (STA) funding for five years, to be safe, no STA fund is assumed in the SRTP at all. Ms. Van Doren added that Marin Transit's fare-box recovery ratio for regular services is only about 25%, so 75% of the costs have to be paid for by taxes and other subsidies and Marin Transit is very dependent on the economy. Mr. Rzepinski informed the group that most of the federal stimulus funds are for capital projects only, not for operations. Ms. Van Doren said that where federal money can be used for operations is in rural transit and about 1/3 of costs for the Stage Coach services are paid for by the federal dollars.

- Mr. Hirsch asked that whether Marin Transit bought or leased the hybrid buses. Ms. Van Doren responded that Marin Transit bought the hybrid shuttles because leasing is more expensive. There are federal dollars available for capital purposes, so as a part of the regular replacement schedule, Golden Gate Transit used the federal funds to replace ten buses. Because the hybrids are more expensive than regular buses, only 7 hybrid buses could be purchased with those funds. The matching requirement for hybrid buses is also higher, and Marin Transit had to use its State Proposition 1B funding for the local match.
- Vice-Chairperson Bortel asked whether Marin Transit will rearrange the EZ Rider services in Novato and whether Measure A is paying 100% of the operational cost of the program. Ms. Van Doren said it is both the County property tax and the Measure A funds that support this special-needs transit
- Vice-Chairperson Bortel talked about the narrower, shorter buses that Whistle Stop operates and asked whether Marin Transit will buy more of them. Ms. Van Doren responded that, with the funding available, Marin Transit would like to purchase buses as "green" as possible and also meet the requirements of the drivers and passengers. The feedback Marin Transit received for those new buses, overall, was very positive.
- Ms. Dahlgren asked about ridership statistics considering the current economic problems. Mr. Rzepinski confirmed that compared to last year, the ridership is still growing despite the poor economy. Ms. Van Doren added that now Marin Transit carries about \$3.4 million riders annually.
- Vice-Chairperson Bortel asked about the safety issue of the transit stops at Marin City. Ms. Van Doren responded that funding was secured for the bus stop safety improvements projects, however, the state took away some of the STA fund and now Marin Transit is trying to find other fund sources to make up for the lost STA funds. She added that the County is planning to apply for TFCA funding through BAAQMD to complete the project. Some of the issues were highlighted in one of the Marin IJ articles from a sheriff's press release. Factors that might contribute to crime are lack of lighting, lack of proper shelter and landscaping. Those problems will be taken care of once additional funding is available.
- Mr. Tye suggested that Marin Transit remove the bus signs in some locations that no longer have bus service so the public is not confused. He also recommended removing one of the bus stops at Stinson Beach because there is a safety issue and the Highway Patrol has been ticketing the bus drivers for stopping in the middle of road. Ms. Van Doren added that Marin Transit is aware of the situation and that the Stinson Beach community has proposed a bus stop in the parking area. Mr. Rzepinski added that, with more staffing coming on board soon, Marin Transit can address and monitor these issues more effectively.

6. FY2008-09 Third Quarterly Financial Report (Discussion) - Attachment

Item 6 was reported following Item 4.

Ms. Zhang focused the discussion on Measure A revenues and expenditures. She pointed out that the Measure A Table in the packet illustrates the Measure A revenues and expenditures on a cash basis for each category as of March 31, 2009. She highlighted the \$400K interest revenue TAM collected for the first two quarters of FY2008-09 and the \$16 million Measure A cash revenue for the first nine months of the current fiscal year. Despite the fact that sales tax is in a downward trend, TAM will probably still collect about \$20.8 million as budgeted for this year, so a budget adjustment should not be necessary. Regarding expenditures, TAM is reimbursing Marin Transit under Strategy 1 the amount

allocated in the beginning of the year, and there is no cash flow problem with transit money. The only category in which TAM may have a cash flow problem is Strategy 3.1, with \$3.3 million in expenditures as of March 31, 2009. Currently, two projects are moving quickly: the Novato Blvd project and the 4th Street project in San Rafael. TAM may find a need for bond financing next year for the Major Road projects. TAM has a 20-year sales tax in place and revenue is very predictable in Marin, so selling bonds should not be a problem. The size of the bond financing will be based on the projects' schedules and cash flow needs. The project sponsors' governing boards will be required to adopt a resolution with the project estimate and timeline before TAM puts the bond financing in place. ED Steinhauser added that project schedules change quickly every few months. She cited an example where the County was optimistic about the Sir Francis Drake Blvd project and thought it would be out for construction by now, but it is still in the environmental study phase. TAM staff will work closely with the project sponsors and evaluate the needs of bond financing next year.

7. TAM FY2009-10 Measure A Revenue Estimate (Discussion) - Attachment

Ms. Zhang directed the group's attention to the staff report that was prepared for the last TAM Board meeting regarding the proposed FY2009-10 budgeted Measure A revenue estimate. The budgeted Measure A revenue for the current year is \$20.8 million, which is more than a 7% drop from last year's actual revenue. TAM is projecting another 4.2% decrease from the current budget for about \$20 million for FY2009-10. In January, the State released the sales revenue trend for the next few quarters. The State is optimistic in projecting the numbers and hopes to see revenue growth stabilize in the second quarter of 2010. This projection might be true for TAM due to the demographics of Marin County and the fact that the revenue reductions are usually not as dramatic as what are experienced by the other counties in the region. The State is making adjustments along the way this year, and it is harder for TAM staff to predict and calculate the revenue numbers based on the normal formula the state use for the future months. Staff will keep monitoring the revenue trend closely and report back to the group with timely updates.

8. Discussion of Next Meeting Date and Recommended Items for the Agenda

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled on Monday, June 15, 2009.

9. Open Time for Public Input

Seeing no one wishing to speak, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.